

IN THE BACKWOODS.



THE

FOREST CROSSING:

LIFE IN THE CANADIAN BACKWOODS.



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THE
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CHAPTER I.

MINNIE'S FATHER.



IT was time to get up, no doubt. Minnie could see through her half-open eyes that the light was creeping in at the sides of the window where the curtains did not fall, and a rooster was crowing in the distance somewhere. In fact, she could hear her father's step on the uncarpeted stairs; but she knew it was chilly, for the tip

of her nose was cold, and it was so warm to lie covered with blankets. If she summoned courage to throw them back it would be dreadfully cold, so she lay still with her eyes half-closed.

Suddenly a sound, which came faintly to her ears, caused her to sit bolt upright in bed. It was a soft pattering against the window-pane. Could it be snow? She could not tell for a minute, but by dint of rubbing her eyes vigorously and winking and blinking for a few moments she discovered that tiny white flakes were falling upon the window; there was already quite a little bank of snow on the sill, and when Minnie saw it her heart sank. She rose slowly, and sighed two or three times as she dressed, not thinking now of the cold, but of the winter which was before her and the struggle which it would bring.

For Minnie's father was a Canadian lumberman, and every year, as soon as the winter set in, he left his home in the town and hastened to his log-hut in the woods, there to remain cutting down trees and splitting the wood ready for the market until the snow was gone and the spring came again. In former years Minnie had been left under the care of an

aunt, and he had taken his wife with him, to keep the log-hut and cook his meals. This was all, for she was an irritable, complaining woman, dissatisfied with her lot, and unwilling to make the best of it, and her constant complaints, which had at first called forth her husband's soothing comfort, at length, when they became uncalled for and almost unbearable, made him a hard, stern, silent man, who bore his life because it was unalterable.

The summer preceding the commencement of my story, however, she died; and her husband, forgetting everything but the young wife of long ago whom he had loved so well, bent over her coffin in sincere grief. But he had had too long and stern a lesson to relax much, and to his only child he was almost a stranger. She was fourteen years old now, and when her mother's place became vacant, and there was no one to keep house, she quietly undertook the duties as they were laid upon her one by one; and her father knew no difference between the old life and the new, except that the house was stiller and there were no complaints. Indeed, if he ever realised that it was a difficult position for one so young, and that she was doing her duty bravely, he never spoke

of it, or praised her in any way, but was the same silent, grave man he had been for years.

Minnie longed to cheer and help him, and in all her home duties strove to make his comfort her chief aim. She had learned to know who is strength in weakness and comfort in trouble, and of Him she sought guidance. She had learned to carry all her little perplexities to her Saviour instead of an earthly friend, and it was her one source of happiness to have that Friend so near. Her father sneered at all holy things. She had heard him laugh and scoff when he stood chatting with some group of men gathered outside the door on a summer's evening. Whenever the subject was made the topic of conversation he never failed to laugh, and say religion was all nonsense, or that "them pious ones was no better than they should be." These things sank down deep in Minnie's heart and made it ache sorely. She longed above all that her father should know the truth and learn to love all good things. She knew that then, and not till then, would he be happy. "If I only could do something towards it!" she cried, and then, seeing no way, she went about her daily tasks with patient toil, waiting for she knew not what to change her father's heart. God all

the time was planning for her, only her poor little eyes could not see the end as He did.

And now the snow had come—the snow which she had been expecting and dreading, wondering what steps her father would take this winter, and fearing lest he should leave her behind and go off into the woods alone.

When she went downstairs it was with a determination to be prepared for anything that it should be her lot to bear, but still with a plan and purpose working in her brain.

John Drew was kindling the kitchen fire, and as Minnie caught sight of his face she saw that he too had seen the snow. He did not look up, however, and Minnie prepared the breakfast, and they sat down in silence. The clatter of cups and knives continued so long without another sound, and Minnie was so anxiously waiting for some word, that finally when her father spoke she started as if frightened.

“I shall get into the woods to-morrow, Minnie, if this snow keeps on, so you had better get the things a little closer together, and put me up a box-full, and then go over to Aunt Lucy's. I shall lock up the house. Snow is early this year.”

"Do you intend for me to stay with aunt this year, father?" asked Minnie, timidly.

"Isn't that what you always do when I am away?"

"Yes, father, but I thought perhaps this year I might go with you into the woods and keep the cabin."

"You don't know anything about it."

"I could learn in a little while, father," she urged, looking at him with beseeching eyes.

"You would be afraid to stay all day by yourself, and the cabin is not over-warm at times," he said, without looking at her.

"I should like to try."

"I don't think it will do." The chair was pushed back, and he rose from the table.

Minnie could not move. She drank her coffee slowly, trying to choke down the tears, for she knew that her father disliked, above all things, that any one should cry, but she was disappointed. It seemed to her that all her efforts for his comfort had been for nothing. He did not care enough for her even to let her keep his little hut in the woods.

"I'll split two or three armfuls of wood before I go down town," said he, and left the room and the house.

Minnie, thus left alone, bent her head upon the table and burst into tears. She so longed to make her father's home happy, and yet now she must give up even the attempt to do so. It was very hard for her to believe that it was God's will thus to frustrate all her plans, which she thought had been good and wise. She cried steadily for some time, and then, fearful that her father would come in and find her thus, she rose and began slowly to clear the breakfast-table.

Perhaps when John Drew came back with the first armful of wood he saw the tear-stained cheeks and surmised for the first time what a disappointment he had brought about, or perhaps God was planning for Minnie; at any rate, on his way to the railroad station, where he and all the rest of the male inhabitants of the town gathered every day to see the trains come in, he stopped at the door of a neighbour's cottage and knocked.

It was opened by a worn-looking woman, who was holding by the hand a boy of five, to whom the sight of the street was a great temptation.

"Good morning, ma'am," said John.

"Good morning, John. My husband is not

at home.—Stand back, Billie.—He's gone to the station.—Be still, I tell you.—Going into the woods to-morrow?"

"I thought of it. I want to see you a minute. Shall I come in?"

"Certainly, come right in.—No, Billie, you'll catch cold; let me shut the door.—Take a chair, John," and the good woman, who always stood a little in awe of the grave, silent man, dusted him a chair, and wondered inwardly what he wanted from her.

"I came to find," said he, sitting down, "whether you were going into the woods this year with Bill. My girl, Minnie, is quite set on keeping the cabin for me. She is a young thing, but she is handy about the house, and I thought, as your cabin is next to mine, that if you were going perhaps I might let her go."

"Yes, I'm going with Bill to-morrow. I shall leave little Billie here; it's too cold for him in the woods. But I'll have to take Nancy; she did not get along well last year, she cannot be contented away from me."

His eyes followed hers to a little girl who sat rocking backwards and forwards in a chair in the corner. Her listless manner and vacant face proclaimed her an imbecile, and the

mother's look showed how great was the burden she bore, and yet with what love she clung to her eldest child.

"Do you think it will do for Minnie?" asked John, a little anxiously. "Jane never liked it, she said it ruined her health."

"If the child wants to go I should let her try. She's a smart little thing, and I'm sure I shall be glad to give her a lift now and then for the sake of having her there."

"Thank you kindly," said John, perhaps all the more earnestly that he thought how unselfish must be the praise of his daughter, who was so great a contrast to the figure in the chair.

As John took his way to the station, the snowflakes fell thick and fast all about him. He noticed the steady increase and deepening since the morning, yet somehow he did not feel the usual dread of the work before him. He joined the men at the station, watched the morning train come in, and even talked awhile with Bill Adams.

"I've been to see your wife," said he. "My girl is going up into the woods with me, and I wanted to see whether your wife would look out for her a little. It is going to be fine weather for sledding, I think."

"First-rate. I'm sure my wife was glad to do anything for Minnie. She's a good girl, and cheers us up wonderfully when she comes in."

Minnie heard her father stamp the snow from his boots when he returned, and then as he stopped to brush them off she heard him whistling to himself. What could have made him so cheerful, and on the day of the first snow too; could it be that he was glad to get away from home and from her?

"It's quite a snow, Minnie," said he, coming in; "but I think it will clear at sundown, and leave us a bright day to-morrow, and yet be good sledding. I've been talking to Bill Adams's wife, and I've about decided to take you with me. She says it will not hurt you, and she'll look after you; so you can put the things together, and perhaps you had better go down there some time to-day and ask about what is best to take and what to leave."

"Oh, father!" cried Minnie, starting up from her chair, "are you really going to take me! Oh, how happy I shall be!"

"Out in the woods, with only me for company?" asked her father, with an incredulous smile breaking over his grave face.

"Yes, indeed, and I'll try hard to make it pleasant for you."

John did not reply, but went out to mend his sled, and he whistled as he worked. He collected and sharpened his tools for winter use, and as he left the barn he patted the noses of the two horses that were to be his helpers in his work. "We are going into the woods, Star and Nan," said he; and he said it almost triumphantly.

Minnie was full of her plans and her packing all the afternoon. She went down to see Mary Adams, and was so full of questions and joyous anticipations that she almost cheered the anxious mother, who was hurrying to arrange everything so that little Billie could be left and the imbecile daughter taken without harm. Minnie amused the boy while Mary baked great loaves of bread, and even ran down to the village store to tell Bill to be sure and bring a barrel of potatoes in his waggon.

Minnie was so anxious that her father should miss nothing to which he had been accustomed, that she worked until late in the evening, long after her father had gone to bed.

Finally she crept softly upstairs to her little

room, which she had left so sadly in the morning, and, full of thankfulness, knelt to say her prayer. It was from a grateful heart, and when she rose and went to the window the clouds were floating away and a full moon was riding in the clear heavens, while underneath upon the earth lay a foot of pure white snow, the harbinger of a long, cold, hard winter.

To-morrow Minnie was to go away miles from any human habitation except the hut of Bill and his wife, and there stay for months with nothing to vary the dull round of common tasks; yet she went to bed with a full heart, singing joyously to herself, "To-morrow we are going into the woods."



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CHAPTER II.

IN THE BACKWOODS.

A low cabin made of logs and imperfectly thatched, and, a few yards distant, another a little larger but otherwise much the same. Around them on three sides tall bare trees stretched for miles, while a short distance in front the railway track was laid, along the sides of which was to be placed in huge piles the lumber they should succeed in cutting through the winter. This was the scene which greeted Minnie's eye when, tired and hungry, the two families brought their teams to a standstill. The horses hung their heads wearily, and Nancy was crying with cold. Mary Adams was sadly thinking of the little one left behind, and John Drew was searching for a shovel

with which he could dig a path through the freshly fallen snow to the cabin door. It was certainly time for some one to rouse them into cheerfulness, or at least a show of it, so Minnie sprang from the waggon, and after a slight pulling about of boxes and bundles, found the shovel, and while her father was busy clearing a path she gave Nancy her little grey muff to warm her hands; which so pleased the poor child that she stilled her sobs in a moment. Ignoring her father's suggestion that she should wait for a path, Minnie plunged resolutely through the snow and unfastened the cabin door. It was bare and drear enough. The plaster had fallen from between the logs and lay scattered along the floor. The ashes of the last fire that had been built were still lying in the fireplace, and a great placard announcing some circus company, which had been fastened against the side, was hanging from one corner and flapping to and fro. The wind had found many places to creep in, and was exerting itself now to its utmost. Minnie's heart sank for a moment and her face looked blank. Her father, who had followed her in, saw it. "It's a poor place to bring you into, Minnie," said he.

"We'll soon make it look very different from

this, father," she replied, cheerfully. "Have you some dry wood for a fire?"

He brought it, and then went away to put his horses into the little log-shed adjoining the cabin which was used for a stable. By the time he returned Minnie had a bright fire burning in the chimney-place, and the floor was swept clean ready for the waggon-load of goods they had brought. During the next hour they worked quickly to make the most of the daylight; and when at last Minnie lighted a candle, it shone upon a cabin no longer empty, but filled with furniture—chairs, tables, a bedstead, and cooking utensils of all sorts. After quite a search, Minnie found what they wanted for supper and made some tea. They needed it sorely, for although the cabin began to look quite habitable, yet the cold wind crept in at the open chinks and made them shiver.

After the meal was over John opened a trunk he had brought, and took from it a large piece of sail-cloth. "I'm going to make you a room with this, Minnie," said he, and with great care he fastened it to the sides and the rafters until he had completely parted off a corner of the room. Into this he carried the only bedstead he had brought and Minnie's little trunk. He

then filled all the open places between the logs with bits of bark or rolls of paper, so that Minnie might not feel the cold.

Her enjoyment fully repaid him for the trouble he had taken, and she watched quite as intently while he hung a hammock for himself in the main room, and moved the tables and packing-boxes into their places.

By the time they had finished their task they were very tired, and the candle was dying in its socket.

"You had better go to bed at once, Minnie," said her father, "the fire-light will shine enough for you to see quite well behind your curtain."

Minnie knew that, but where should she read her Bible? She hesitated a moment, and then taking the book from her pocket she knelt down by the open fire and by its light read her evening chapter. Her father watched her in silence; but he was not offended, she knew, for he bade her good-night very pleasantly, and told her if she was not warm enough to speak to him, and he would give her another quilt.

Minnie was so weary that she fell asleep almost directly, and slept so soundly that when she finally woke the late November sun was rising, and she could tell by the sounds that her

father was preparing breakfast. She dressed as quickly as possible and came out from behind the curtain.

"Oh, father," she said, "why did you not speak to me?"

"I did not mean that you should hear me now," he replied, "but a pan fell from my hand and made a noise. You will have all you can do to-day, I'm thinking."

The new tone in her father's voice made Minnie's heart throb. He really cared for her, then, and had tried to move softly that he might not awaken her! She longed more than ever now to work for him, as she saw there was a chance to make him happy. He left the cabin as soon as breakfast was over, and when Minnie looked out at the door the horses were fastened to the sledge, and he was putting in a bag of oats for their dinner.

"Do you bring the horses back at noon, father?" she asked.

"No, I shall not come back until sunset."

"Then take something with you," she urged.

"I can have a dish filled in a minute."

"No, I cannot be bothered with it, and a cold lunch is worse than nothing on a sharp day like this. Get along, Nan," and he drove

off along the road through the long line of trees.

Minnie looked after him gravely, and thought of the long day before him in the woods, of the steady hard labour of cutting the trees with nothing to break the monotony of the toil. She turned back into the cabin with a wistful face, and seeing the confusion which still reigned there, set herself to work to arrange the cabin. She too had a long day's work, but it was a pleasant task, and as she saw the whole place growing neat under her hands, and a homelike look appearing in the rough little hut, she longed for her father's coming.

But her task was done by noon, and as she sat on the doorstep in the sunlight resting from her labour, and looking backward into the cabin to inspect her work, she suddenly remembered a large bundle of old newspapers her father had brought to paper the walls of the cabin to make it warm and cheerful. Why could she not paper the room herself and save her weary father so much trouble? She sprang up, found the papers, made some paste, and set to work. It was a longer task than she had imagined it to be, for it required some coaxing to make the papers cling to the logs and yet lie smooth

upon them, and Minnie was new to the work ; but when at last it was finished she ran down to the other cabin, and asked Mary Adams to come and inspect her work.

The kind woman—one of those never so full of her own tasks but she had time to help another—came and admired so much that she begged Minnie to come the next morning and assist her to paper her own. Perhaps she knew that such a request was worth far more than simple praise. Minnie promised readily ; and then, as it was almost sunset, she set the table, and placed a slice of ham on the fire to cook and made some biscuit, and had them all ready to put upon the fire in one of those curious pans which have a cover in which to spread hot ashes, and which is placed upon an open wood fire such as Minnie was obliged to use. This pan was to be placed as soon as the heads of her father's horses appeared through the gap in the trees. But it grew dark before he came, so Minnie lighted a candle, set it in the window, and listened for his approach. At length she heard his voice stopping the horses, and the biscuits were on the fire in a moment. She knew well that the horses would be cared for before her father would eat his own supper,

and she measured the time it would take so nearly that when he opened the door and came in the supper was smoking on the table. The cabin was so neat, and bright, and warm, and the supper so nicely prepared, and, more than all, the face of his daughter was so bright, and she seemed so glad to see him, that he sat down with a feeling of content and pleasure in his heart which was quite new there.

"Why, who has been papering?" he asked, after a moment's pleased survey of the cabin.

"I have."

"Who showed you how?"

"Nobody; I thought I would try, and then Mary came to see, and she said it was all right." Which, by the way, was a very mild version of Mary's exclamations and praises.

"It is done better than I could have done it," said her father; "and you have cooked this hot supper besides. Why, you are a first-class little housekeeper. Are you not very tired?"

Weariness was nothing after such praises. She sat down with a glad feeling of reward in her heart, which was not lessened when her father took his place so contentedly by the fire and told her of his day's work. She knew he had never addressed so many words to her be-

fore. He even pulled from his pocket a handful of checkerberries, which he had found in the woods and gathered for her. But what did Minnie's heart the most good was to notice that he took good care that the candle should be burning brightly and standing on the table when she was ready to read her evening chapter, and although he said nothing about it he was very still, looking at the fire while she read. Scoffer as he was, he knew that Minnie had lived her Bible all day, and that the reading was not the only thing. If she had read her Bible and then neglected her work he would have had no patience with it.

She said nothing about his dinner the next morning, but let him go away without a word, for she had a little scheme in her own mind that she was determined to carry out. Toward noon she made some soup with plenty of potatoes and rice in it, and a little piece of meat, and when it was thoroughly cooked she poured it into a dish, and after having covered this carefully she wrapped the whole in a piece of flannel. She then put on her cloak and hood, and with her precious bundle started.

The road through the woods was longer than she thought and more difficult, for her feet sank

in the soft snow, and it was a long time before she heard the strokes of her father's axe. Finally, however, she heard the distant blows, and then she came upon him in a little opening, cutting deep gashes into a big tree, while the horses were fastened at a little distance eating their dinner of oats from a box placed upon a fallen tree.

She came up behind him, and was close upon him before he knew. She spoke then, and he turned with a start. "How came you here, child?" he said, hastily dropping his axe and coming up to her.

"I've brought you some hot soup, father; I knew that you would want it, it is so cold in the woods, and the day must seem so long." She gave him the dish, and he took it without a word, but with a strange look in his face, as if no one had ever done so much for him before, and he did not quite know how to receive it. He cleared a space in front of a fallen tree and made her sit down there. She chatted with him while he ate his soup, and was glad to see him resting and looking so pleased.

"I feel like a new man, Minnie," he said, when he had finished; "I only wish I could spare time to take you home on my sledge, but

I must get back again to my work." She bade him good-bye, took her dish, and went back again through the woods a happy girl, for she was learning the way to her father's heart.

There never was a day after that, except when the drifts were too high and heavy for her to wade through, but he learned to expect her figure about twelve o'clock walking through the woods ; and often did he listen for her voice, which he was sure to hear singing some sweet hymn long before he saw her form.

As the days and weeks went on, the winter set in, and the weather was unusually severe. The snow piled high and drifted in the forest, and there were days when the men had to dig their way step by step to where they were at work. When they found it thus difficult they joined labours, sometimes working together on John Drew's land, and sometimes on William Adams's. Then Minnie had two dishes to carry instead of one, and her bright face was always greeted with, " Here comes our Minnie. What a brave girl ! "

John Drew had of old counted the days he had spent in the forest, wishing that each one would be the last ; now he almost lamented when one was gone. Sometimes both men gave

up a day to a journey to the nearest post-office to procure any letters there might be awaiting them, and to replenish their food and grain. But in December this year the roads were so piled with snow that for some weeks they were unable to make a road through the woods.

At those times the only way was to walk on the railroad track, and of course they could only bring back small quantities, for it was twice the distance by rail, and they were often afraid of becoming exhausted or numb from the intense cold. On one of these occasions, however, John Drew managed to bring in his large pocket a pair of indiarubber boots for Minnie. She was very much pleased, but it was not so much with the gift as at the feeling which she knew must have prompted it—love for her and realisation of the trouble she took for his sake.

Minnie had brought a few books with her from home, selected with much care from her small stock. She offered one night to read to her father.

"Have you anything but the Bible?" he asked.

She replied eagerly, "Yes, some story-books." He told her he "wouldn't mind if she tried one of them;" so it happened that she

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read aloud evening after evening, stories indeed, but telling of faith in Christ and self-denial for His sake—stories of courage and work, which made the little maiden's cheeks glow, and her heart throb with desire to be like those of whom she read. John Drew listened at first entirely for the story, but he learned at least to respect the faith of which they spoke, and the love toward God which inspired them. Simple stories they were, of child-life often, but in the long hours of those winter evenings, when they were shut in by the snow, and the storms went whistling around the cabin, the girl read and the man listened, unconsciously drinking in all the lessons taught, the one with unquestioning faith, the other with growing regard for the things taught, and the bright example which every day was set before his eyes.

And the pile of lumber at the side of the railroad track grew higher and longer every day.






CHAPTER III.

THE NEWSPAPER PARAGRAPH.

A LONG train of cars was rapidly whirling its way through the miles of forest which stretched through the Dominion of Canada ; barren and desolate the road was, but it served as a connecting link between the United States and the British Provinces. There was scarcely anything to be seen from the car windows. Marks of newly-felled trees, with now and then at rare intervals a log cabin and a pile of lumber, were the only objects for many miles. At longer distances a little village, where the train would come to a standstill for a few minutes, and the knot of men, having watched its approach, would stand gazing at it stupidly. The locomotive would suddenly



shriek out its dislike at such staring, and trundle away, moving faster and faster as the distance from the station increased.

Horace Walters yawned, looked at his watch, tapped his feet upon the floor, and whistled.

"Rough country, sir," said a fellow-traveller, noticing his weary manner.

"I should think so," he responded; "I have not seen a house for twenty miles. Here, boy, give us a paper." The newsboy turned, gave him the paper, and went on crying his papers through the train.

"That is the seventh time that boy has been through this car with something to sell to-day," said Horace, unfolding his paper. "First it was maple sugar—second, prize packages of stationery—third, apples—fourth, books—fifth, candy—sixth, vegetable ivory—seventh, this paper. He must have enough stock for a store in the baggage-room. I think the best way to kill time is to read this paper through, down one column and up the next."

He commenced his task, and read industriously for some time, and then, finding the car close and uncomfortable, he raised the window. The wind blew in strong and cold, so that he

was soon chilled through. He reached one hand to close the window, but finding it required both, dropped his paper and attempted to unfasten the lock. It proved unyielding, and as he leaned forward to bring his strength to bear upon it the wind came in with a sweep, and whirled his paper out upon the top of a long pile of lumber. He looked after it in dismay, brought the window down with a crash, and looked round at his companion, who laughed.

"Your occupation is gone," said he. "But the paper dropped near some cabin; perhaps its inmates will get the benefit of it."

"Mere chance if they can read," responded Horace; and putting his head back against the window-frame, he composed himself for a nap.

The paper thus carried away fluttered awhile on the top of the lumber, and then settled down between two logs; and if God's hand had not been there, as everywhere, leading and ordering all things for the best, it would have remained until the rains washed it to pieces. But when John Drew came from the woods with his last load of wood that night, his daughter, ever on the alert to help him, ran out, all

muffled up in hoods and shawls, to unfasten the horses while he was unloading at the wood pile. As they were thus at work, something fluttered in the wind with a rustling sound, and Minnie saw a white object on the lumber. "What is that just at your elbow, father, which seems moving about?" she asked.

Her father reached out, and putting his hand upon the paper, drew it from its resting-place.

"It is a newspaper fallen from the train, I suppose," he said. "You had better take it into the house; it may be of some use." He had dislodged it carefully, but still not without some rents, and Minnie put it in her pocket, and for the time being forgot all about it.

Another severe snow-storm came on that night, which drifted in so many places that they were kept busy in the morning making paths about the house and into the woods. So slowly were they obliged to work, that it was nearly noon before they were out of sight, and Minnie turned from watching them to do her work in the house. Finally, however, when everything was done, she sat down to her sewing, and the rustling of the paper in her pocket reminded her of her treasure. She took it out, and, smoothing its crumpled folds, began to

read, and found, much to her joy, that it was a paper only two days old. She read on for some time, when suddenly she started up, looking frightened and pale, glanced first one way and then another, and finally sat down again, burst into tears, and covered her face with her hands. She sobbed awhile, and then starting up again, she put on her hood and cloak, found the snow-shoes her father had bought for her from an Indian woman, fastened the clumsy things upon her feet, and started into the woods. She heard Mary Adams calling her, but she would not look around, only hastening on. How slowly she seemed to move, and the long queer shoes, although they kept her on the surface of the snow, seemed so hard to drag. Finally, she saw the two men at work, and they both stopped and hastened to her as she called to them and shook the paper.

"What is it, Minnie? What has happened?" asked her father, anxiously.

Minnie, gasping and sobbing, could not reply, but pointing to a paragraph in the paper sank down upon the snow. Her father took the paper, and not knowing of anything better to do, read it aloud. "'A little boy while sliding upon Silon Lake, at Frederick, fell into

an air-hole. Those near hastened to his assistance, and succeeded in rescuing him, but so long a time elapsed before he could be conveyed to his home, that he took a severe cold, resulting in fever, from which it is doubtful if he will recover. His name is Billie Adams. His father is a lumberman in the Canada woods, and the boy is at present residing with an aunt.' "

William Adams stood, white and trembling, leaning upon his axe. "Have you told his mother?" he asked, faintly, after a moment's silence.

"No," sobbed Minnie, "I could not; but I will take care of the cabin and Nancy if you and Mary wish to go to Frederick."

"I could not go, and the roads are stopped with snow; how could she get there?" groaned the man; and shouldering his axe he strode away towards his home.

Minnie sat looking after him, while her father read the newspaper paragraph over and over. "Ah, poor things!" he sighed; "and the roads are stopped. Come, Minnie, I guess work is over for to-day."

They went back slowly, and the snow piled high on each side of the path looked terrible to

Minnie, who had previously liked the high white banks. Now it seemed only a barrier between the parents and the sick child. As they came in sight of the railroad track the train shot by with a shrill whistle and great clatter. "Father," said Minnie, out of her sudden thought, "I'll stop the morning train to-morrow, and make them take her on board. They will stop for me, perhaps, when they would not for you or William."

"We will go in and ask them by-and-by," replied her father; and they instinctively avoided the grief-stricken cabin, and went in silence to their own door.

Afterwards, when they were ready to go, and Minnie was bending over the fire drawing the logs together, in order to leave them safely, her father, who had been watching her closely, spoke.

"We are going to try to cheer them up a little, Minnie," said he, "and I'm afraid you do not feel very cheerful."

"How can I, father?" she said, raising her head; "little Billie is all the comfort they have, and if they should lose him it would seem too hard."

"Perhaps he will not die,"

"Oh! I hope not. Think of his life being taken while Nancy is left."

"I don't read the Bible, Minnie, but I've heard you say that it teaches that God does everything for the best. Now, when it comes to the point, you don't believe it yourself," and he laughed.

Minnie burst into tears.

"Go over and see them, father; I am not fit."

He turned and left her to an hour of bitter self-reproach. She had tried so hard by word and action to lead him to the Saviour, and now it was destroyed by her own want of trust. That laugh with which he left her went to her heart. It seemed as if all the good impressions she had striven to create were useless in a moment. Little comfort could she give to the troubled heart. It was a fit punishment. She had been feeling herself of too great importance, and God had humbled her.

If she could have seen and heard her father while she sat thus mourning, she would have been somewhat consoled. He reasoned very gently and kindly with the half-distracted mother, who longed to reach her favourite child, but saw no way. William sat silent and down-

cast by the fireside, not capable of laying any plan or giving any hope.

"God can take care of little Billie," said John Drew, at last.

"Then why did He let him fall into the water?" cried the mother.

"Do not accuse the good God of what was the child's own carelessness," said John, arguing for that which he did not know until this moment that he believed—Minnie's work had not been utterly in vain—"perhaps the God you accuse is bringing him back to life now."

"Then oh! then why cannot I go to him?"

John bethought himself of Minnie's offer.

"My girl says she will stop the train tomorrow, if you will go by it," said he.

"I'll go; of course I will," said the mother, starting up. "But how can she stop it?"

"I don't know. She says they might stop for a child, when they might not for one of us."

"Do let her try it; it is the only hope that remains," sighed the poor woman.

So John Drew went home and told Minnie, thinking it would cheer her, and not knowing what a sore wound he had given her.

"I will do it," she said.

Accordingly the next morning she went to

the cabin and found Mary Adams all ready. She offered not a word of comfort or sympathy, feeling that she was unworthy; but telling Mary to be at the end of the lumber when it was time for the train, she took up the bag which was standing ready, and carried it to the place where she wished her to stand.

When the locomotive whistled in the distance she came out, and Minnie, bidding her father and William Adams to keep out of sight, led the way. She took her place and held her bag in her hand, while the two men, crouching down behind the wood-pile, watched intently, and John Drew called to Minnie to be careful. Minnie knelt down upon the ground and put her ear to the track.

"It is coming," she said. "Father, as soon as it slackens speed help her on quickly, while I am talking to the engineer. Lose no time. I'll take good care of Nancy while you are gone, Mary." She started off down the line, pulling from her pocket a large red handkerchief of her father's.

The whistle sounded again, much nearer. She spread her handkerchief, and stood upon the track, waving it; and as the train came on she ran ahead of it, still waving her handkerchief with all her might.

The engineer saw her, and whistled for her to get out of the way, but as she continued to run and wave the red signal he slackened speed, and by the time they reached the lumber pile the train was almost at a standstill. Minnie signed to Mary to get on, and the engineer called out at the same moment,—

“What’s the row?”

“A woman’s child is dying in Frederick, and the roads are blocked between here and the station. Let her get on your train, in pity for her misery.”

“Is that all you stopped the train for?” asked the engineer, angrily. “I’ve better business than to take in lumber. Take care you never do such a thing again. Get her on quick,” he added, his better nature overcoming his anger.

“She is on; oh, thank you!” said Minnie, springing up and down and clapping her hands.

The train began to move.

“I’ll have you sent to prison if you stop another train for nothing,” said the engineer, shaking his head at her; but she only laughed and clapped her hands again, and the train quickened its speed, and in a minute was out of sight.

"You did that well, Minnie. I'm proud of you," said her father, excitedly, as she joined him; "it was a difficult thing to do."

Minnie smiled, and did not reply. She felt that a more difficult task remained, and that was to amuse and care for the fretful, helpless imbecile while the two men were away in the woods day after day, and not to know how long the task might continue. She watched in silence while the teams were being prepared for the day's work.

William Adams came up to her before he left. "I'll come back as soon as I can," said he. "I hope she'll give no trouble," nodding toward the cabin.

"I'll do my best," said Minnie, feeling that she owed them much for her faithlessness the night before, which prevented her from offering a word of sympathy.

Nancy sat in a chair by the fire when she went in. "Car gone and carried off mammy," she said, and began to wail mournfully.

"Car come back with mammy and bring Nancy a red apple," said Minnie, encouragingly.

"I'm going to see if it is coming now," she said; and there was no such thing as coaxing her to wait, so Minnie followed, and spent a long

hour in roaming with her about the clearing, feeling every minute that she ought to be at work in the cabin. When it was near noon she coaxed her in with a promise of something good, and gave her a cake to eat, while she hastily prepared her father some potato soup.

Then she remembered that it would not answer to leave Nancy while she carried it, so she wrapped her up in a thick shawl and they started.

When they returned Nancy was so weary that she was glad to lie down and go to sleep, and Minnie hurried through her neglected tasks. By-and-by she awoke, and had to be amused for two or three hours—in fact, until the woodmen were seen returning through the forest.

When Minnie lay down that night, tired and exhausted, she could not but wonder how long a task lay before her, and pray God to give her strength and courage.





CHAPTER IV.

EVENINGS IN THE CABIN.

IT was hard work—anxious, trying work—to have the care of both cabins, to prepare and carry into the woods the midday meal, and to feel the constant anxiety lest the imbecile girl, whose fancies and movements were without number, should fall into some mischief or danger when her back was turned. William, to do him justice, was as anxious as she, and made her duties as light as possible. As soon as it was in any degree possible, he began to work his way with horses and sled toward the station; but he was hindered by another fall of snow, which necessitated doing part of the work a second time. His anxious face and abstracted manner were sad to see; and when,

the morning after he had cleared his path for half a mile toward the station, he found it blocked again, he sat down and put his head in his hands with a groan. There seemed to be no way to get news of his wife. The work in the woods was rendered more and more difficult. There had not been known so severe a winter for forty years—not so much on account of the snow as the extreme cold. It was as much as they could do to keep the cabin warm. Their provisions were low, and they were reduced to potatoes and bread. At last, Minnie, seeing how downcast and despondent the two workmen were, exerted herself to the utmost to be cheerful and hopeful. Poor Nancy learned to love her as much as it was in her power to love anybody, and to follow her like a dog; and this made her task a little easier. William was very grateful to her, and told her often how much he wished his wife knew how well they were getting on.

But when the teams were ready, and the men started off in the morning, Minnie was left alone frequently for the whole day. Knowing, as she did, that if any sudden accident should happen there was no one near to call, her heart sank. She dared not cry, for

when she had done so on one occasion Nancy set up such a howl of misery, and started off for the woods in such haste, that she dared not try it again. So she prayed and longed for the night to come, as it always did at last, bringing her father home.

She found, much to her surprise, one day, that by dint of patient effort she could make Nancy talk intelligibly, and that cutting pictures and forming objects out of paper was to her a source of endless delight. So, becoming interested and pleased with her task, as we all feel content when we resolutely set ourselves to do our duty, she began to teach her to join words and sentences. She talked to her by the hour about some one thing, and then made her put words together which expressed some idea of it. For days she pointed toward the words at sundown, and repeated "Father's coming," until the girl knew distinctly what it meant by seeing the men appear through the opening in the woods. One day she devoted herself to saying over and over, "Little brother is better, I hope," thinking that if the child had been dead the mother would have found some way to return.

They gathered in William's cabin in the evenings, and Minnie often read to them ; but her stock of books and papers was becoming exhausted, and one night she told them she had nothing more to offer, and suggested they each should tell a story.

"Certainly," said William Adams, "and I can tell you one to commence with." He moved his chair nearer the open fire, and, taking the poker in his hands, he struck the fire now and then, and sent the sparks flying up the chimney by way of emphasis.

It was a story which a child might read for its simplicity, of two children who were lost in the woods, but he dwelt so earnestly upon their loneliness and fear, and upon the distress of the parents, that when he had finished he was so touched by it himself that he turned round to his [auditors with tears in his eyes, and asked them if it was not a sad story. It was one of a very few that he had ever read, and to the simple-minded woodman it seemed strangely sad and pathetic.

"Now, father, it is your turn," said Minnie, as William pushed back his chair and drew his coat sleeve across his eyes.

"Well," said he, "I'm no hand at stories,



IN THE LOG-HUT.

but I'll tell you what happened to me once, and you may decide about it if you can. I was travelling along a dark road in the night toward a town which lay on the opposite side of a stream which I knew I was approaching. I expected to cross a bridge there, and so reach my destination. I was walking fast, for the road was hard and good, when suddenly I stopped short, and then wondered why I did so. Hearing a gurgling sound near me, I stooped, and put my hand into the water of the river, which, swollen by spring rains, was a quarter of a mile beyond its usual banks, and flowing at my feet. In another moment I should have been into it. The question is, What saved me?"

"You heard the sound of the water," said William.

"Not until I came to a full stop."

"The ground was uneven."

"No, it was smooth and hard."

"Something told you."

"What was it then?"

"It was God," said Minnie, decidedly.

"That's all very well; but why did He save me?"

"He wanted you for something, I think, father," replied Minnie, timidly.

"I haven't found out what it is," he answered, with a laugh. "Come, Minnie, now for your story."

Minnie proceeded to tell in her own words the story of Naaman the leper, and her voice was full of sympathy with "the little maid" who said, "Would my lord were with the prophet which is in Samaria; he would recover him of his leprosy." Her own intense interest in the story made her tell it in such a way that her listeners did not move until she finished.

"That's a good story, Minnie," said William; "it's out of the Good Book, isn't it?"

"Yes," said Minnie; "so it is all true, you see."

Her father, who was bending over the fire, was silent and motionless.

Nancy, who had to all appearance been listening to the stories, suddenly spoke, "Little brother better, or mother not stay so long."

"Bless the child!" cried William, turning towards her, "where did you learn that? It seems as if the good Lord must have sent it as a message when you say it. That is what I have been hoping for days past."

He took Nancy's hand and patted it softly, that being the way they always praised her.

She laughed and repeated the words again and again.

"John," said William, dropping her hand, and walking up and down the cabin, "I can't stand this suspense any longer; I must go down the track to-morrow; it is but a day's journey, and I can be back by this time to-morrow night. If it is any way suitable weather I shall go. You will take care of Nancy, won't you, Minnie?"

"Oh yes; don't you be worried about her," said Minnie, pitying his anxiety, and willing to do anything to relieve him.

John rose to say good-night, and, opening the cabin door, looked up at the sky. It was a bright moonlight night, quite mild and pleasant, but round the moon there was a heavy halo.

"I'm afraid there's a storm coming, William," said he; "you would not start out in a storm?"

"No," said he, reluctantly, and went in and shut the door.

The next morning when Minnie came out in front of the cabin she found her father talking

to William, who had his overcoat on, with scarf and mittens, ready for his long walk.

"I know it is warm and fair," said John, "but I am always afraid of these very bright days in winter; such a clear sky as this with a mild south wind never lasts through the day. You had better go in a rain, for then there is no danger of intense cold, or of the snow overtaking you. I do not know why it is so, but I fear a storm."

"Oh, nonsense!" said William, impatiently, "I cannot be content to miss another day, especially such a bright one as this; so good morning."

John walked away with him to the railroad track and stood watching him down the line, and when he was out of sight came slowly back, looking grave. "You need not bring my dinner to me, Minnie," said he. "I'll come back early in the afternoon, for I'll only go as far as the first clearing, and bring a load home when I come."

Minnie went over to the other cabin, singing softly to herself, and began her morning's work; but Nancy seemed to understand that her father had gone farther away than usual, and was restless and unhappy. Minnie was

very patient with her, and taught her to say, "Father come back to-night," and finally she sat down on the doorstep and said it over and over to herself, rocking backwards and forwards.

Minnie was very busy for a long time, and when at last she was ready to return to their own cabin she noticed that Nancy had ceased to talk, and that she had gone to sleep with her head against the door-post. It had become cloudy, and a chilly wind was blowing, so she was obliged to rouse her and persuade her to come over to the other cabin. By noon the clouds were very heavy, and it began to snow, the flakes, hard and fine, remaining upon the ground where it was cleared without melting.

"Snow," said Nancy, pointing to the window. "Father come home to-night?" and this time it was a question.

"Yes," replied Minnie, and then added, "I hope so," for she felt that she dared not speak too certainly. He might stay at the station all night if the storm increased.

It began to increase steadily, and by two o'clock Minnie saw her father coming through the woods. "You are very early, father," she said, stepping outside the door into the snow.

"Yes," said he, "I dared not stay longer ; I fear we are going to have heavy weather. I think you had better keep Nancy here to-night, and fasten the other cabin securely. I will attend to Bill's horses, and give them a warm bed. I shall bring his lantern back and some blankets. It may not be so hard a storm as I fear, but it is best to prepare for the worst."

He put his own horses in their stable, giving them oats and hay enough to last until the morning, and then went over to the others, and attended to them in the same way. Minnie made the preparations that her father suggested, and then they sat down to await the end of the storm.

John had brought in harness to mend and a piece of hard wood out of which wedges were to be made, and he was kept busy with these the remainder of the afternoon.

The storm continued to increase steadily, and the roads were soon covered. By nightfall a strong wind arose, and drifted the snow, which was hard and dry, into great heaps. Minnie noticed with dismay when she took the last look-out after the candles were lighted that the wood-pile, now so high and long, had entirely disappeared beneath the drifting snow, and

that in many places the track was heavily covered.

"Father come home to-night?" said Nancy, fretfully.

"No, not to-night—to-morrow," said Minnie, in reply; and then with a sudden thought she asked,—

"Father, has the afternoon train passed?"

"No," replied her father; "it is detained, I suppose; you will hear it by-and-by."

She saw that he was anxious, for he could not keep steadily at his work, but wandered restlessly to the window, and shading his face with his hand looked out.

"It is drifting against the pane, Minnie," said he. "I cannot have that," so with a violent effort he lifted the window and with broom and shovel removed the snow from the drift underneath the sash.

"Have you got that story you told us last night?" he asked at length.

"Yes," said Minnie, her heart throbbing; and going to her trunk she brought him her Bible open at the place where the story of Naaman is written.

He read it half aloud. "It is a little different from the way you told it," said

he. "Did this prophet do anything else wonderful?"

Minnie laid down her work to find him one incident and then another, until finally they fell into a talk about the prophet which lasted a long time. "Now you see, Minnie, if I could do some great thing like this prophet, I might believe that God saved me that time for something," he said, closing the book and rising; "but my life has been almost wasted. I've never succeeded in making anybody happy." He thought of his discontented, grumbling wife, and sighed heavily.

"If the prophet bid thee do some great thing, wouldst thou not have done it? how much more when he said unto thee, Wash, and be clean," said Minnie, softly, half to herself and half that he might hear.

He sighed again, but said nothing, and drew the embers together on the hearth, once more opening the window and clearing away the snow.

"We'll go to bed and hope for the best, Minnie," he said; "we have done all we could. The animals are well cared for, and everything is safe. If any one is out in this awful storm he will see the firelight through

the cabin windows. I shall put on a log or two and let the fire burn slowly ; I will get up by-and-by and clear the window again."

They thought of the traveller who had started out on foot, but neither dared to speak his name for fear that Nancy would understand what they said. Minnie could only pray for him earnestly before she lay down. She was awake some time listening to the storm, and finally she fell asleep. She was dimly conscious that her father was moving about the cabin, and once the cold air and the sound of shovelling made her know that he was clearing the window.

Suddenly she roused entirely and found herself sitting up in bed trying to rub her eyes open in order to see and to rouse her sleeping faculties in order to hear.





CHAPTER V.

BLOCKED BY THE SNOW.

"**M**INNIE, Minnie!" called her father's voice; but there were more voices than his. She heard them without in the snow, and amongst them a hissing sound, as of escaping steam.

"Oh, father! what is it?" said Minnie, excitedly hurrying on her dress, and hastening out into the cabin.

"The train is blocked by the snow, and the passengers are hungry and almost frozen. Build up a fire, and put on the kettle. Make some hot drink, tea or coffee if we have any, and make something for them to eat. I must get them in here, and then dig my way to the other cabin. The storm is awful."

He had been out in it, and was covered from

head to foot with the shining particles. His beard was almost white, and his face was red from fighting with the wind, while the melted snow stood in water-drops upon his cheeks.

"But, father," said Minnie, "shall we use up all the provisions we have? they are not many, you know."

"Ay, all; and all in the other cabin, too. Will not your God, who fed Elijah in the wilderness, feed us too if we help those in want? I have more faith than you to-night, child. It seems as if I was finding out what God wanted me to do."

Minnie, thus rebuked, went to work swiftly and silently; and her father disappeared with his shovel. She had built a roaring fire, put on the tea-kettle and a great pot of potatoes, and stirred some corn-meal for butter-cakes before her father returned. He was digging his way to the train, she knew, and she determined to follow in his steps. She put on some socks over her boots, and fastened a heavy shawl around her body, tying it behind. She tied her snow-shoes together, and hung them round her neck, and, taking a light shovel in her hand, started. It was still snowing, and she needed

it the moment she stepped outside the door, for her father had only stopped to clear a path which he could struggle through. The lights of the train were twinkling, and the shouts of the men who were clearing the snow in front of the locomotive came muffled by the air, thick with flying flakes. John's work had been slow and hard, but when Minnie came up to him he was near the train.

"Father!" she called; "I'm clearing after you, and as soon as you reach the train call out, and I'll come. I've my snow-shoes with me, for some one to wear over the snow to the cabin."

"Have you everything ready?" he called through the mist between them.

"All ready, tea steeping and potatoes boiling, butter-cakes ready to fry."

The work went on steadily for a few minutes, and then a glad shout announced that he had reached the train. She thrust her shovel into a bank of snow, and rushed forward, but only to encounter snow that required all her strength to clamber through. Finally, she reached the car, mounted the steps, and went in. The men were all, or nearly all, out ahead with the engine, but the women and children were

here huddled up in a corner to keep warm, for the wood for the stove had been used up; and although plenty lay along the track it was green and unfit for use.

One worn-out woman was trying vainly to hush a little baby's cries, and around her were gathered four other children, all under twelve years old. One was asleep, or appeared to be, and the others were crying. There were four others in that car, who gave no answer when Minnie stooped down to speak to them—two older ladies, whose husbands were helping the men to dig, and one very old lady, whose still older husband had wrapped her in his own coat, and was walking up and down the aisle of the car to keep warm.

Minnie shook a young lady gently by the shoulder, but she only moaned, and would not answer. In fact, they all seemed listless and inactive, and Minnie turned quickly to her father. "They are benumbed with cold," she said; "I will run back, and bring some tea."

"I can go more quickly than you, child," said her father, and he was gone.

Minnie managed to get the children upon their feet, all but the one who appeared to be sleeping, and, taking the youngest from the

mother's arms, she bade them all follow her. They did so without a word, and although they reached the snow safely, the little ones were too small to wade through the drift alone, and Minnie had to wait with the little suffering baby in her arms until the mother helped them one by one through the deepest snow. When they were almost at the cabin, Minnie met her father with the hot tea. "I'll come back at once," she said, and hurried on. She opened the door for them, and the children rushed in and sank down before the fire. The mother took the babe, and saying, "Bring back little Tim when you come," let Minnie go.

"There are potatoes in the pot, and tea in the saucepan," she said, as she shut the door.

Her father was giving the old couple the steaming tea when she returned. She went to the young lady and again tried to rouse her, but she was unsuccessful until her father brought some hot tea, which Minnie held to her mouth. She took a swallow mechanically, and then opened her eyes.

"Where am I?" she asked, languidly.

"With friends, who are going to help you," replied Minnie; "come with me."

"Is this Frederick?" she asked.

"No, only a cabin in the woods; but the train is snowed in, and cannot go any farther. Don't you want something to eat? Drink some more tea." She drank, looking at Minnie over the cup.

"Who are you?" she asked, when she had had enough.

"I am a woodman's daughter; my name is Minnie. Come, shall we go now to the cabin, and get something to eat?"

The lady rose, and was ready to follow her, when Minnie remembered the child, and going to him Minnie found that he was not asleep but still more unconscious than the girl had been. She took him in her arms, and led the way, when she remembered the young lady in her extreme exhaustion would sink into the snow, so she laid her burden down again.

"Did you ever wear snow-shoes?" she asked, taking them from round her neck.

"No; are those them? They are too large for me."

Minnie laughed, "I believe you will have to try them," she said. "Come!"

She took her out to the platform of the car, and down the steps, and there fastened the

snow-shoes on her feet, and told her how to step in them. The exertion and Minnie's cheerful voice quite roused her.

"Now go," said Minnie; "walk in the direction of that light while I go back for the poor little boy. Don't stop once, or you may be overcome with sleep. I will be with you in a few minutes."

She rushed back for little Tim, who was a lifeless burden, and therefore a heavy one, but she struggled on and came upon the young lady almost at the cabin door.

"Ah, I must sit down," she said, as Minnie came up.

"Oh no, indeed you must not," replied Minnie; "here we are now. See that warm fire; how foolish to sit down in the cold with a fire so near."

In a moment they stepped into the now crowded cabin; but as Minnie appeared with her burden, they separated right and left, so that she might lay him near the fire. She began to rub his limbs, and call him, but finding this did not answer, she asked if some one would give her some drink. A cup was given to her, and she poured a little of its contents into his mouth. A low moan

was the only response, but the tea was swallowed. The mother, who had been at the other end of the cabin, and had not seen Minnie, now came forward, and finding little Tim in such a state, began to cry aloud.

Minnie looked up. "Be quiet," she said, in a voice which startled herself. "You will hurt the child instead of doing him good. Come here and help me by calling to him in a pleasant voice."

The mother, thus silenced, knelt down by the child, "Arrah, Tim, my darlint, and can't ye wake up now, and see all the folks, and the rale lady that brought ye out of yon car. Bad luck to the owld ingine that led us intil the snow the day! Coom now, Tim, my darlint, wake up till ye have some 'tay."

A smile went round the group; but Minnie's face was grave, and she continued to gaze in the face of the little boy until she saw that life was coming back, and the mother's voice had had its effect. Then she turned away to find how the meal was progressing, and discovered that the butter-cakes were already in process of cooking, and the potatoes were gone. She refilled the pot from her store, and finding some coffee laid by for

special occasions, she made a great pot full, intending to take it to the men working in front of the train.

"Haven't you any meat, or something more hearty?" asked one of the men who had come in, and who, after his first hunger was appeased, wished for something more.

She had her hood on again and had taken up her pot of coffee and her tin cup when she was asked this.

"My father, sir," she said, turning her earnest face upon the man, "is sharing his last food with you to-night; if we had anything better you should have it."

She went out amid the murmurs of the company against what the Irish mother called that "grady baste." She found her father at the other cabin, just opening the door. "Here, father, drink this," she said, holding out a cup of coffee, "and show me the path to the engine."

"Ah, thank you, Minnie," said he, taking it gratefully. "Are all safe?"

And Minnie's heart throbbed with thankfulness that she could reply, "Yes, all safe."

When she arrived at the snow-bank where the men were working, trying to make a way

for the locomotive, she found so much confusion, and it was so dark, that she knew not how to proceed. She could not be seen, so presently, when there was a lull, she asked in a clear, sweet voice, "Would any one like a cup of coffee?"

They crowded around her instantly, and while they drank she asked them what progress they made. "Not much; it is too dark to see clearly where to dig," one man replied.

"There is a warm fire in the other cabin now," said she; "perhaps if you wait till daylight it will be easier, and you will be rested and warmed."

"Who are you?" asked one, looking curiously at the little muffled figure.

"I am a woodman's daughter," she replied again.

"You understand your business," he said, not rudely but kindly, at the same time returning the cup to her hand with thanks.

"I think we had better do as she says, gentlemen," said the conductor, coming up with his lantern in his hand. "We are tired out, and will work better for a little rest. It is nearly morning, and by daylight we can

see our way better." He held his lantern above his head, and looked at the workers. It was a queer collection from all ranks of society, from the father of Tim, who was taking his family to the "Provinces" to settle, to the gentleman who stood wiping from his forehead the perspiration his unusual toil had collected there.

"Fifteen of us," said the conductor, lowering his lantern, "and a snowy lot we are. Can you give us something to eat?" turning to Minnie.

"Potatoes and bread, sir—all we have," she replied.

"We shall be very glad of them, I am sure," he replied. "Will you lead the way? Here, take a lantern."

She took it gladly, and went forward, the fifteen men trooping after her. She reached the cabin a moment or so in advance of them, and hung the lantern on a nail just over the door, that they might see the way in, and having seen them safely housed she returned to the other cabin.

She found that Nancy had wakened, was frightened at so many strange faces, and was crying bitterly, while the passengers, alarmed at her strange manner, had shrunk away from her. Minnie explained to them and pacified

Nancy, and then set to work to make rude beds and couches on which the travellers could rest. People had sorted themselves. The old lady—whose husband had gone to the other cabin with the workers—and the young lady were together, the Irishwoman and her children had retired to a corner, where she was arranging a bed, and four or five ladies, whose husbands were also with the working party, and who had come from other parts of the train where Minnie had not time to go, were still eating. Minnie made them all as comfortable as possible, and then she went to the door.

It was dawn. The locomotive, laden with snow, stood upon the track with a little wreath of steam curling up from it, while in front was the great bank of snow which it had been unable to break. The snow around was trodden by hundreds of footprints, and a gleam of firelight came from the other cabin. But overhead the clouds were breaking and the day was coming.





7

CHAPTER VI.

A SEASONABLE PRESENT.

THE sun was shining full upon a clear cold morning when the weary travellers roused themselves in both cabins. Minnie worked in one cabin and her father in the other, preparing breakfast. They did not lack helpers, for, grateful for Minnie's untiring diligence the night before, the ladies helped her to peel the potatoes and mix the meal, while the gentlemen brought wood for both fires. Minnie was almost startled when she reached into the barrel after more meal, for the scoop scraped against the boards at the bottom. She uttered an exclamation, and looked up to find the earnest eyes of the young lady she had roused with such difficulty looking at her.

"There is enough," said Minnie, quickly, "only I did not realise that it was so low."

"A little boy, the son of a poor widow, once said that he thought God listened when his mother scraped the flour-barrel," said the young lady, smiling.

"Indeed, I think it is true," said Minnie.

The workers took their breakfast of potatoes and cakes very hastily, and went out to dig away at the great snow-bank. As fast as they cleared, the engine pushed forward, so that in a few hours the train was quite out of sight. Those who remained behind tried to while away the tedious hours of waiting, but found it rather difficult. The cabin was small to accommodate so many, and the children were fretful and crying. There were only one or two who cared to read the books that Minnie had, and the remainder sat idly drumming their feet upon the floor. The peril which had drawn them all together as a common family in misfortune was in a manner over now, and they began to remember the social distinctions which separated them. This would have extended to Minnie also if it had not been for her unwavering endeavour to please and entertain them. In this she was assisted by the young lady, who made friends with everybody, and was ready to lend a willing hand everywhere; and Minnie

was very grateful to her. Near noon they heard suddenly the shrill whistle of the locomotive, and the train came trundling back.

"Road all open to the next station," called out the conductor; "all ready to go now."

Baskets and bundles were hastily and joyfully gathered together, and Minnie ran out to her father to ask anxiously if anything had been heard from William. They had not been to the station, but only far enough to see their way clear in the distance. There was no trace of him on the road, although, at John's suggestion, they had worked carefully.

Minnie looked grave. "I do not know what to do with Nancy," she said; "for she is more restless than ever, and asks constantly for her father."

Just then John heard his name spoken, and turning he saw that all the passengers were gathering in a group near the train. Minnie and he both turned and walked that way. One of the gentlemen was standing upon the step of a car and speaking to the rest.

"But for these good people, my friends," he said, "we should have perished with hunger and cold. I think, therefore, before we leave, that some testimonial is due to them for their

kindness and hospitality towards us. We cannot express our gratitude better than by raising a purse for them."

"Certainly, raise a purse," was echoed on all sides; but before a movement could be made toward collecting the money, John spoke.

"Friends, my daughter and I have been glad to do what we could for you, and we wish for no reward. Our food, however, is almost gone, and if you could send us by a returning train enough to tide us over until the road is open, we would be thankful; and if you will kindly inquire at the station for one William Adams, find when he was last seen, and report that he is missing, we shall be more than thankful, and we wish you a safe and speedy return to your homes."

As he finished they crowded around them to shake hands with them and thank them for all that they had done; and when they were on the train they opened their windows on the side toward the cabin, and the conductor, standing on the wood-pile, said, "Now, one and all, three cheers for the woodman and the woodman's daughter." They were given heartily; there was a shout and a clang from the bell, and they were off. Minnie stood on the track shading her eyes

with her hand, and watched the train until it was a speck in the distance, and then she turned to her father with tears in her eyes.

"I'm sorry enough to lose them, father," she said; "but I've work enough to do to keep me cheerful. If I only knew that William was safe, I should feel quite happy to think we were able to do so much for those poor people."

Nevertheless, as she worked in the cabins to restore them to their usual neatness and order, there were several thoughts working in her mind. First of all, there was but little—a very very little—meal left in the bottom of the barrel, and what if they should forget to send more?

There were potatoes enough to last a week, but what was a week if they had another snow-storm? She could not stop a train a second time, and if she could, what would it avail? They would not bring food. "If I could only trust God enough to *know*, as I ought to know, that He will take care of us whatever happens," she thought, and then she tried to put all fear out of her mind.

The dishes that had been used were all to be washed and put away, the blankets folded, and the rooms swept. As she did these things

Minnie thought of the people who had been there, and realised, perhaps for the first time in her life, that there were those in the world who did not know the name of work, and to whom life was one long summer's day. Some of the ladies had whispered among themselves, and Minnie had overheard them pitying her in her lonely life.

"What a dismal life!" one had said.

"Yes," was the reply; "I do not understand why people will live so."

And Minnie could not forget it. She also knew that the life of Gertrude Dayton, whose card with her address had been left in her hand at parting, and an injunction to write to her if she needed help—she knew that her life was widely different from that of the woodman's daughter. Little refinements of manner and dress and speech had told her this, and her bearing and words had also indicated that she was a Christian. "We serve the same Master," thought Minnie; "but how widely different is our service!"

Minnie could not see herself as we see her. We know that she was giving all her power to win her father to be the Lord's servant, and that no slightest duty accomplished was

lost, with this end in view. To us no life could be brighter or better than hers, and her want of faith we can but feel that God forgave, seeing the difficulties in her way. We call her noble and courageous, but she saw only that life was cold and dull, and that now and then she lost sight of her great aim, and that often she was faithless and unbelieving. But for her longing to be better she would often have fainted by the way from sheer discouragement. But the one great necessity that her father should not perceive that life grew dull to her, kept her at least outwardly cheerful; and we all know that what we are obliged to do becomes in itself at last a pleasure. This was in part brought about by the night of peril, but caused more by the constant strain of the weeks of Mary's absence and the delay of William's return.

Her father cut his way into the forest by sundown, and was ready to work in the first clearing the next morning.

"I hope the train will come to-morrow, Minnie," said he, when the last of the butter-cakes was eaten, and only potatoes remained.

He laughed as he said it, and Minnie felt rebuked again for her unbelief.

The morning broke again clear and cold, and after the breakfast of potatoes he went away with his sled. Nancy was crying because she could have nothing else, and Minnie in vain tried to comfort her. The morning wore to noon, and noon to night, and her father returned. Minnie had been crying; she could not help it, but she did not mean to let her father see it. He was too quick for her, however, and looked at her closely as she came to help him to unfasten the horses.

"Ah, Minnie," said he, "you've been crying; poor child, you are quite tired out. Have you cooked our great supper? I really believe, tired as you are, that you would like more cooking to do. Ha! ha!"

Minnie's lip trembled as she bent down to unfasten a strap, but she raised herself quickly, for far in the distance came the sound of the whistle of the locomotive. "Oh, father," she cried, springing forward, "there is the train."

He put his horses away quickly and followed her down the path to the track. Far, far away, she could see the smoke curling up and the rails began to tremble under her feet. "What if it should not stop?" she cried, breathlessly.

It rumbled on and on, nearer and nearer, and

finally, as it was almost upon them, began to slacken speed. Slower and slower it moved, and finally stopped altogether.

"Hallo there!" said a man, springing from the baggage-car. "Here is a load for you; come, help us out with it."

Minnie looked at him cagerly, but suddenly a sound made her turn, and there on the snow just alighted from the car stood William, his wife and—could it be?—yes, little Billie!

Minnie ran toward them, and crying out in her joy, "Oh! where have you come from?" threw her arms about Mary's neck, and burst into tears.

"You good girl," said Mary. "William has told me all you have done. How is Nancy?"

"Well, but needing her mother. Come into our cabin. You will have to forgive us for using your cabin the night before last. Was it then?—it seems a year since."

"Oh! we've heard all about that," said William, "from those grateful passengers. You did a good work, Minnie."

She opened the door for them, and called for Nancy. The girl came forward, and when she saw them all she looked first at one and then at another, and said slowly, "Father

come home ; little brother better, or mother not stay so long."

"Oh, my child ! my child !" cried the mother. "Do you really know ?" and she clasped her close.

Minnie ran out again, brushing the tears from her eyes, to meet her father rolling a barrel of flour into the cabin.

"Go and see what we have got," said he, excitedly. "They have not forgotten us, certainly."

Minnie ran forward. The train was gone, and on the snow were a barrel of meal, three large hams in yellow covers, a large package of tea and another of coffee, a bushel of apples, a barrel of potatoes, a peck of onions, and a large package of sugar. There were also cans marked "Condensed Milk," and a bundle of oatmeal, and one of rice.

"You will have cooking enough, Minnie," said her father, coming back. "This will last us much longer than we wish to stay."

Inside the package of tea they found an envelope enclosing five ten-dollar bills. "This is too much," said John, uneasily ; "I do not desire it."

"They think it is far less than you deserve,"

said William, who was watching the opening of the goods. "They kept saying, 'We should have been dead but for him,' and they would add something else to the load. The superintendent of the road was there—come up from Frederick to look after the missing train—and he demurred at allowing the train to stop here to-day. You should have seen the conductor's face! 'Sir,' said he, 'if those people had not taken us in and sheltered us, there is no knowing when we should have arrived, if we ever did. I'll stop there and land those things if I lose my place for it.'"

"Well, Minnie, where are your tears now, child?" asked her father.

"I'm ready to cry again, father," she said, "to think how ungrateful I've been. I should have believed that God would take care of us, and now to think that He has brought even little Billie safely home."

"I'm very thankful for that too," said William, "and for all the danger the good God has brought me through. I've been in sore need of help since I left. I cannot tell it now, John, but I will some time." His voice choked, and he turned away and went to his own cabin.

"Ah, father," said Minnie, turning back from the door when they were left alone, "you shall have such a supper! I only hope you will enjoy eating it as much as I shall preparing it."

If he did not just at first it was his own fault. He was constantly saying that they sent too much, and that he was afraid they spent more than they could afford, but finally he settled down to his supper.

"Minnie," said he, after silence had lasted some time, "I am very thankful to the good people who sent us these things; and," he added, after a minute, "to the good God who put it into their hearts to send them."

And Minnie's heart leaped with joy to hear him say so.





CHAPTER VII.

AN ACCIDENT.

IT seemed as if a few days had worked a great change in William Adams. He was grave and more thoughtful, and one day, when Minnie had carried his dinner to the working-place in the forest he told her, as he handed back the empty basket, that he had known what it was to long for warm food and drink; "and then it was," he added, "that I learned how to pray." That evening he told them all about it.

Nothing happened, it seems, on the downward journey, except that the air was so raw and chill that he was thoroughly cold and worn out with the long walk when he reached the station, which was about noon, and just after it first began to snow. Fearing a storm,

he resolved that if he obtained any news of his wife that he would return immediately after dinner. He found a letter waiting for him there, and was very much cheered to find that little Billie was better, and that they would both return to the cabin as soon as the child was well enough. The letter was dated a week back. William thought, therefore, that his wisest plan would be to return immediately and carry the news, both on account of the loss of time from his work that a delay would occasion, and also because of the increasing storm. Accordingly, almost as soon as dinner was over—and it was not as full a dinner as might have been wished—he set out upon his return. He was not so fresh as in the morning, and the snow impeded his steps. The snow was so thick, too, that the landmarks were undistinguishable, and he could not see how far he had still to travel. He soon grew very weary, and, to add to his trouble, the short winter afternoon came to a close, and with the night a heavy wind which swept the snow into drifts. He struggled on, however, until at length he seemed to become strange to himself, and to have curious impressions, as if he were watching another man, and that the

stranger had taken his feet and was making them plough a path through the drifts. Then he could not see the sleepers, and occasionally missed his footing and slipped between them; and once he fell, and when he rose again found that he had sprained his foot slightly, so that his walk was even slower than before. Finally, he distinguished through the whirling masses of snow a black object, and upon coming nearer discovered it to be a shed which he had supposed he had left miles behind him. He had hoped that by this time he was near the cabin; and now, finding that only about a third of the journey had been accomplished, he realised that the storm would quite prevent him from reaching the cabin that night. He resolved, therefore, to turn back and seek refuge at the station again. He tried to force open the door of the shed, and having succeeded he stepped inside and cleared himself of snow, and beat his hands together to warm them. He dared not stay, for fear he should be tempted to sit down and so fall asleep; but after having become a little warm he started out again, and this time towards the station. He found that all traces of his former footprints were gone, and he had the work to do

over again. Faint for want of food, thoroughly chilled, and alarmed for his safety, every step seemed a mile to him. It was then he began to pray. A vision would seem to come before him, first of his wife and then his two helpless children, and then the idea of leaving them to struggle on alone in the world would rouse him to quicken his steps a little. The wind was blowing furiously now, and beating the snow into his face. He felt as if another quarter of an hour would quite use up all his remaining strength. His steps began to falter, and his head to grow dizzy, when suddenly he saw a gleam of light. "And I declare," he said, solemnly, when he was telling Minnie the story, "I thought at first that it was God, and that He had sent an angel of light." He was roused to put forth all his remaining strength, and so reached the step of the station, when he fell with a groan.

When he awoke to consciousness it was to see his own wife bending over him, and little Billie holding his hand. They had come there by a train soon after he left, and been detained by the storm.

It seemed as if the two families in the cabins in the forest were drawn together more closely

by the events of the weeks that were passed, and each felt dependent on the rest. They all loved Minnie very much, and she, for her own part, would have been very happy if it had not been that her mind was constantly busy with a thought of the people who had spent the night of the storm with them. It seemed to her now that her life was thrown away and useless. Their lives had enjoyments which hers lacked, and pleasure which she could not know. They had pitied her, and she began to pity herself. She began to think it unfair that she should be selected to live a lonely life while others were happy with friends about them. She compared Mary Adams with her young lady friend, and was impatient at the thought of the difference between them. This was not altered but rather made worse when she received a letter from her friend, which gave her a glimpse of a life so different from her own. So discontented had she become that she did not see what a sweet spirit of Christian love breathed through the whole; if she had not blinded her own eyes, the letter would have made her more satisfied instead of less.

But God, who knows just when we most

need to feel His hand as a check upon our actions, put the one great cure in Minnie's way and changed suddenly the whole current of her thoughts.

There had been a long season of mild days, and the snow was melting under the sun's rays and fast disappearing. The work in the woods, so much delayed by the severity of the weather, was hastened and prolonged, so that the day was made very long. Minnie was obliged to rise before light and prepare the breakfast, and her father left the clearing by sunrise. He did not return until it was past sunset, except when he brought a load for the long pile. This soon became a great part of the work, for they had prepared the lumber in the forest, and brought it now, load after load, to the railway. Left thus to herself, Minnie had plenty of time for desponding thoughts, and her father missed her cheery welcome upon his return home. It troubled him, for he was quick enough to discover that she was discontented; and Minnie was in great danger of losing all the hold she had upon him, for, he questioned with himself, if her religion could not help her now, of what use was it at any time?

One morning, just as he was leaving the

cabin, she gave him a very sharp answer to some demand, and he looked at her in astonishment. "Your religion does not seem to do you any good in these days, Minnie," said he, and drove off without further remark.

Minnie was very much hurt. She sat down on the doorstep and cried as if her heart would break. It was as if her father had held up a mirror for her to see herself, and the reflection had been a true one. She felt that she had not been living as one who loved her Saviour above all earthly things, and that her old feeling of distrust was uppermost. The great trouble was, how was it possible to undo the mischief she had already done?

When she finally rose and went about her duties it was with a restless step and hopeless face, which would have roused the sympathy of any one. It was then—as it was, oh! how often—that she needed a mother's gentle guidance and help, and a mother's love to soothe her.

She had been busy with her morning's work about an hour when she heard some one running and calling to her. She ran to the doorway, where she saw William Adams running breathless and beckoning to her.

"Oh! what is the matter? Where is my father?" cried Minnie, in great alarm.

"Your father is hurt in the forest by a falling tree; you must come immediately," he cried, in alarm.

Minnie had only time to snatch her hood and run away back into the woods. She did not stay to ask questions, but rushed forward, and never did her step seem so slow and feeble. Finally, when they came to the forest clearing, she saw at the other side of it her father upon the ground with a newly-fallen tree lying across one foot and leg, which seemed crushed beneath them.

She hastened forward and knelt by his side, but his eyes were closed and he did not know her, although she called to him in tones of great distress.

"We must move the tree first, Minnie," said William; "take the other side, and we will lift together."

They did so and tried repeatedly, but to no purpose. Finally they gave up the attempt, and stood looking at him, when it occurred to William that they might fasten the horse to the tree and drag it off, lifting it as much as they could. Accordingly they fastened

a chain round the tree and then to the horse, and while Minnie stood at his head to urge him forward William lifted the log as the animal pulled. A struggle, a call, and a moan from the wounded man, and it was done, and Minnie hastened to raise her father's head and lay it upon her lap as she sat upon the ground beside him.

He opened his eyes, and seeing her troubled face he said, faintly, "Poor Minnie!"

All her strength and courage seemed to return, and for an instant she was almost glad of the accident. "I'm not poor Minnie at all, father," she replied; "for I'm going to take care of you and get you well."

He tried to smile, but it ended in a groan.

"We must hasten and get him home," said William, and he began to put the horse to the sledge. When this was done he put a quantity of chips upon it, to make a soft bed, and he and Minnie together with great difficulty lifted the injured man upon it. Then they started off upon their return, and although the sledge moved slowly and gently over the snow, yet every movement caused fresh pain and drew forth a groan from John. They went to Minnie's heart, but she was brave and cheer-

ful, and kept constantly telling him that the end of the painful journey was nearer and nearer, until finally they drew up at the cabin door. They lifted him again, this time with Mary's help, and when they had placed him on the bed they cut away the clothing from the bruised limb to find how great an injury had been done. The long delay since the accident had inflamed it very much, and the flesh was badly torn by the dragging of the log. William's face grew grave as he looked at it.

"Minnie," said he, "we must have a doctor."

"How?" asked Minnie, breathlessly, thinking of the miles that lay between her father and the needed help.

"Some one must go to the station; and I think it will have to be you; for if he needed lifting you could not do it, and if any danger occurred there must be a man to meet it. You can have the best horse, and after all it is only a ride of two hours and a half."

Minnie caught her father's eye looking at her. "I'll go," she said, and immediately turned to get ready, that they might not see how much disturbed she felt at the prospect of

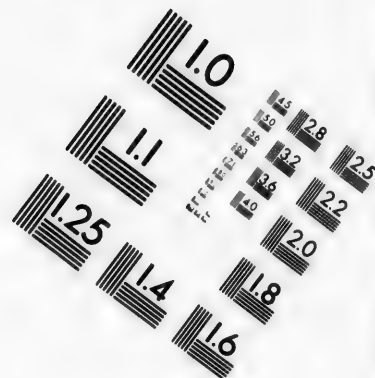
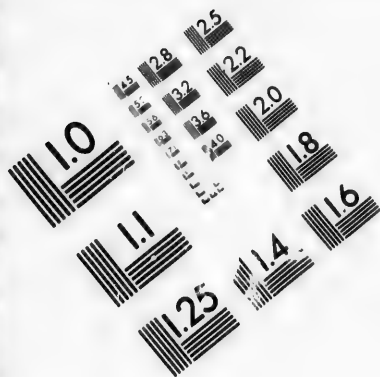
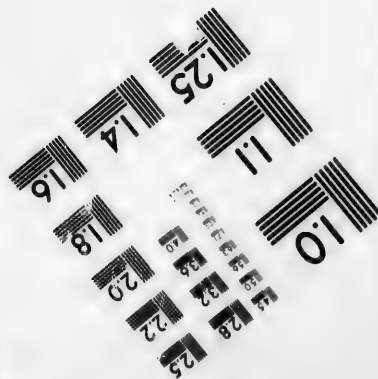
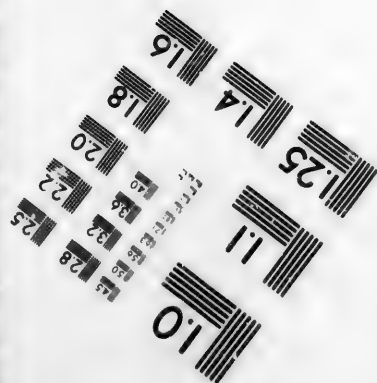
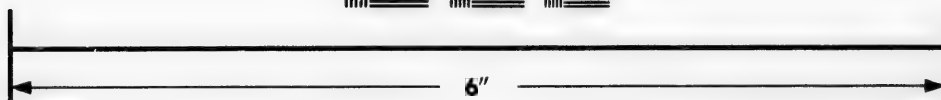
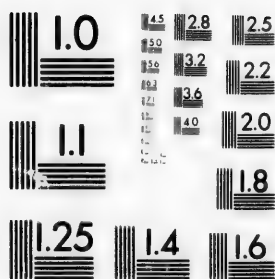


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the journey through the forest. The horse was prepared for her, and she mounted, not without much sinking of heart. William and Mary stood near encouraging her, and bidding her ride fast, so that she might not be detained after nightfall. At length all was ready, and she turned her horse's head towards the road, if such it may be called, which led toward the station.

"Good-bye, and God bless you!" shouted William after her; and with this for help she disappeared through the trees.





CHAPTER VIII.

ANXIOUS DAYS.

MINNIE let her bridle fall upon the horse's neck, and gave herself up for a few minutes to all the desponding thoughts which arose in her mind ; but soon in upon these came the remembrance of the Saviour, upon whose arm she leaned, and the presence which was promised. She prayed with all the earnestness of her heart for her father and for herself, that they might be kept in safety, and that they might learn to watch and pray. As she rode along it seemed to her that every step was a wordless prayer, she felt so dependent upon the Arm above. The road was unbroken, but fortunately the snow was not very deep, and the long thaw had made it soft and yielding. The horse, who was an old friend of Minnie's, and

knew as well as a human being would have done that he had her upon his back, stepped cautiously, and only hastened his steps when he felt it quite safe to do so.

It was afternoon when they came in sight of the station, and Minnie took courage. Going back she should have the company of the doctor, and even if sunset came she should not be afraid.

Strange to say, the possibility of the absence of the doctor had not occurred to any one of them, and when it was announced to her Minnie heard it with the utmost dismay. The doctor's wife, of whom she asked the question, said she hoped he would return just before night, and she was sure, if the young lady would wait, he would go with her.

Thus it happened that Minnie was obliged to put her horse into a stable, and do one of the hardest duties required of mortals—wait. She sat in the doctor's office, or a little sitting-room so called, and looked out upon the one street of the village for three long hours, and then there came a messenger from the doctor, saying that he should be detained all night where he was, but would go into the forest in the morning. The person in waiting, he added, must remain,

as he did not know his way to the cabins. Poor Minnie!

The doctor's wife, a kindly old lady, pitying her distress, tried to comfort her, and told her she could stay where she was until the morning dawned; but it was a trying thing to give up the sight of her father or any knowledge of him until the morning.

She learned at least one lesson, and that was of how little avail any home would be if the inmates were not happy. The doctor's wife made her comfortable in a better room than she had ever occupied before in her life, and she slept in a little bedstead of walnut, with white draperies about it; but she tossed upon it restlessly for a long time, and wished herself in the little corner behind the curtain in the cabin. She fell asleep finally, and just as morning dawned she was awakened suddenly with the sound of wheels and a man's voice below. She sprang up, and looking from her window found, to her great joy, that it was the doctor.

She hastened downstairs as soon as she was dressed, and found him at his breakfast. He told her that he would return with her, and was so kind to her in her distress that she was quite comforted. They set off together about ten

o'clock, and rode through the forest in company. Minnie used to look back upon that ride in after years as a green spot in her life, for the good man, out of the rich treasure of his experience, talked to her of the love of God until it seemed that she was at the gate of heaven.

Minnie had been telling him some of the thoughts which she regretted, of her discontent and fretfulness.

"God knew all that, and pitied you too, dear child," said the doctor. "He has given you light now; you see how safely we may trust in Him."

"If I only could, sir—always!"

"You can if you will; it is only to *know* that everything is ordered by Him for you."

"But He is not interested in all my doings, sir."

"Do you suppose, Minnie, that He was not interested in the sisters at Bethany? He used to love to visit there. Do you not suppose He took an interest in all their household? If it had not been so would He have been spoken to by Martha as He was?"

"But He loved them, sir," said Minnie.

"Can you doubt the same love to you when He died for you?"

It seemed to Minnie that she could never doubt again; and she became quite cheerful as the distance grew less and less between them and the wounded man. At length the clearing was visible, and Minnie could see a figure at the door of the cabin watching. She urged her horse forward, and in a few minutes was at the door.

"How is father?" was her anxious question.

"Very anxious about you, and in great pain," responded Mary. "Is that the doctor?"

"Yes; I had to wait. Come in, doctor, if you please," she added, as he came up.

Then followed the painful half-hour of dressing the wounded limb, and Minnie stood near through it all, although it went to her heart to hear her father groan. When the doctor had finished, he stood back, spectacle-case in hand, to deliver the oracular address which always is the finishing touch in a doctor's visit.

"This is going to be a tedious affair," he said, "and you must have patience; but if you lie quite still, and allow Minnie to do all there is to be done, there is no reason why you should not recover in a month or six weeks. But remember if you allow yourself to be troubled by anything it will put you back."

It is always a good thing that the good God has forbidden us to look forward and know the future, and it was especially good in this case. Minnie began her task with a brave heart, and with a determination to win her father's heart; but she found that taking care of a sick man is a very difficult undertaking. She succeeded better than she knew, for the Bible words which she now read in her father's hearing were precious seed destined to bear much fruit.

But the cares of the house and the attention her father needed took away many opportunities, and, worse than all, Minnie found that her father was troubling himself about the work in the forest. It was nearing the end of February now, and by April it would be time for them to return to the town. The lumber was cut in the forest, but not split, and there was enough for one man to do, and the lumber was still to be brought from the first clearing to the railroad track. It troubled John very much, and although he did not speak of it, yet Minnie knew by his restless manner and anxious face that the burden was upon his mind. Besides, he grew rather worse instead of better, and Minnie tried to think of some way by which his anxiety could be relieved.

One night, when she had been sitting a long time silent, listening to her father's sighs, and anxiously pondering the way of relief, she suddenly spoke,

"Father," she said, "do you think, now that you are able to move a little, you could spare me in the daytime?"

"I might, I suppose," he answered, a little fretfully; "but where can you wish to go?"

"I thought I could drive the horse and bring wood to the pile, and so hasten the work, as it is so late in the season."

Dead silence on the father's part.

"What do you think of it, father?"

"Could you do it, child?"

"I'm sure I could, father; only it would take me away from you."

"I could spare you, but I cannot ask you to undertake such a task."

"You have not, father. I have offered, and I should like to do it."

"I do not deserve it—" He broke down completely, and Minnie hastened to his side to soothe him.

"Who put it into your heart to do so much for me, Minnie?" said he.

"Who could it be but Jesus?" said Minnie, softly.

"I do not understand you. How can He teach you?"

"Father, dear, just think a moment. He loved us so that He died for us, and taught us that if we only believed in Him we should live with Him for ever. Oh, father! how I wish you could love Him as I do! Then you would know what it is to believe."

Her father sighed heavily. "I cannot see what you mean," he said; "but I would give worlds if I could."

Minnie's heart throbbed with joy. "'Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.' You have the promise, father," she said, earnestly.

And then she did what she had never dared to do before—she knelt and prayed at her father's side. It was a prayer for guidance and strength, and then a prayer of thanksgiving, earnest and full, that her father had even expressed a wish to believe on the dear Lord Jesus, whose love passeth knowledge.

And in view of this, all toil, all privation, all loneliness seemed as nothing.



CHAPTER IX.

CONQUERED BY LOVE.

IT was no easy task that Minnie undertook, but a courageous spirit and a brave heart did much. To stand on a rough sledge and manage two horses bumping over the rough places in the road and steadying them through the narrow track was difficult; and often a keen wind made her fingers numb and her feet like clods of ice. When she reached the forest she had to assist William in lifting the wood upon the sledge, and then drive back again to the railroad. She never complained. It was enough that her father was rapidly recovering, and that the lumber in the forest was disappearing. John learned to do without her, and as soon as he tried to help himself he found it such a change from a posture of per-

fect helplessness, that even that added to his daily-increasing strength. Mary Adams, too, was very kind, and in her gratitude to Minnie was glad to help her in any way.

Minnie and her father had talks together in these days which neither of them ever forgot. Her little Bible was well studied, for her father asked her many questions which needed answers from the Inspired Word itself.

Although Minnie had read many Bible stories to her father—of Daniel and Moses, of Elijah and Elisha, of Ruth and Esther, and the stories of the Gospels—yet she had never read to him the story of Calvary—first, because she could not feel it in her heart to hear him doubt and question its truth, and also because she thought one must love the blessed Lord intensely to be able to comprehend His sacrifice.

She began to think now that she was wrong in this, and selfish also, and she determined to find a good opportunity for a long reading. This was rather difficult, for now that the days were longer the work was continued later, and when Minnie arrived with the last load at the pile, there was work in the cabin to do, though her tired feet would almost

refuse their labour. Her constant study was how she could best approach her father, so that she might lead him to Christ; and all the while she was doing another work which she little suspected. William and she worked side by side in the forest, often without conversation; but Minnie, her heart full of her father's new-born hope, sang to herself the precious hymns which she had treasured from time to time. She had no idea that William listened, yet he did, and would listen for her voice long before he could hear the tread of the horses' feet.

One evening it so happened that the last load was a very small one, and William, being very weary, took his seat upon the top to ride home, instead of walking as usual. Minnie sat in front guiding the horses. She drove some time in silence, and then, as if she was thinking aloud, she began to sing a little Sunday-school hymn, which had grown as familiar to her ear as the sound of her own voice.

“I love to hear the story
Which angel voices tell—
How once the King of glory
Came down on earth to dwell;

I am both weak and sinful,
But this I surely know,
The Lord came down to save me
Because He loved me so."

It seemed to her listener such a joyful cry of a loving heart, that he longed to join in the song, which he scarcely understood. She stopped suddenly at the close of the first verse, and was silent. They were climbing a hill, and the horses were walking slowly. It had been a beautiful day, a perfect harbinger of spring; and now, just at sunset, there was a golden glory in the sky, and the mellow light was slanting in between the trees, lighting up the forest with a mild, soft glow. The snow had been melting fast all day, and even now, in the still twilight, the water was dripping from the branches, making little notes of music in the silence. Both the riders were stilled, and one at least felt that "day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge" of the glory of God.

In a few moments they reached the top of the hill, and Minnie stopped the horses that they might rest, and looked forward through the forest to where the sun had made the sky full of glory. It was very still, but suddenly

out of the silence she began again to sing, this time a very cry of pain and sorrow that went to William's heart :

“ O Jesus, Thou art standing
Outside the fast-closed door,
In lowly patience waiting
To pass the threshold o'er ;
Shame on us, Christian brethren,
His name and sign who bear,
Oh shame, thrice shame upon us,
To keep Him standing there.

O Jesus, Thou art knocking,
And lo ! that hand is scarred,
And thorns Thy brow encircle,
And tears Thy face have marred ;
O love that passeth knowledge,
So patiently to wait !
O sin that hath no equal
So fast to bar the gate !

O Jesus, Thou art pleading
In accents meek and low,
‘ I died for you, My children,
And will ye treat Me so ? ’
O Lord, with shame and sorrow
We open now the door ;
Dear Saviour, enter, enter,
And leave me nevermore.”

She ceased, and started the horses on their downward journey.

William drew a long breath.

"What do you mean by that, Minnie?" he asked.

"By what?" she asked, turning toward him with surprise.

"Why, you sang as if we had been ill-treating the Lord. What do you mean?"

"Oh, is it not wrong not to believe in Him when He has done so much for you, William?" she said, earnestly.

"How believe?"

"Trust Him, love Him, give up your whole life to His service; submit yourself to the guidance of His good Spirit. It is little enough when He has done so much for you. And if you do He has promised you eternal life. Oh, what wondrous love."

There was no reply, and the wood was taken from the load and piled by the track in silence.

Minnie had come to a decision, and after supper, when the dishes were washed and put away, and her father made comfortable, she brought her Bible and sat down in front of the fire to read it by the fire-light.

"Father," she said, "four different men wrote the story of the life of the Lord Jesus, and I am going to read you the account which

each one gives, that you may know how complete a life it is, and what a death was endured for us."

If Minnie had not studied for many days the way in which she might best read the story of Calvary, she could not have chosen as she did. And then her whole heart was in what she read. There was not a sound in the cabin but the gentle tones of her voice, while she read the record of the four Evangelists of the last days before the crucifixion; and when she finished, she turned to the story of the man who besought the Lord to heal his child. "All things are possible to him that believeth," said Christ. And the father of the child cried out, and said, with tears, "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief."

"Ah, Minnie, I can cry out with him," said her father, eagerly. "I do indeed believe, I can indeed accept such a Saviour. Now I can indeed see that there is no hope of heaven for me except I love Him who died for my sins. But think what love it must have been to stand between a guilty world and God. Oh, Minnie, pray the father's prayer for your father!"

Ah! how Minnie prayed, and presently the

voice of her father joined hers, and there was joy among the angels of God.

It seemed to Minnie, after this happy night, that work was twice as easy, now that her father joined her in the morning prayer which consecrated the day. It was not many days before John told William of his new-found happiness.

The honest man replied, "John, I'm heartily glad for you; and I wish I felt as you do; for God has been very good to me, and since the night of the storm I have felt that I could not thank Him just with words. Perhaps in time I shall come to believe as you do."

It seemed as if John's new heart made him better in every way, for he began rapidly to recover his strength, and after three or four more weeks was able to resume his forest labour. This he did as soon as he was able, that he might relieve his faithful daughter.

About this time some timber traders rode over one day from the station, and made bargains for the pile by the railroad track. William and John shared the profits, and were very glad of the opportunity to make the sale.

The snow was rapidly disappearing, and the season was almost over. The traders remained

all day, and walked about the property, inquiring its price and timber value, and seeming much interested.

A few days afterwards there came a note from one of them, offering a fair price for a lot of land to place a house upon, and a portion of the forest land to work. This was to John, and he was very glad to avail himself of the offer. As a consequence of this, there came workmen, after a few weeks; and one of them, more shrewd than the others, brought a little stock of groceries with him, and put up a shed, which he made into a sort of store.

Soon after, the other trader bought land of William, and the sound of the hammer was unceasing. It seemed far from lonely in the clearing now, for there was work constantly going on, and voices were heard from morning till night.

One day John came into the cabin with a new scheme.

"I do not see why we should go back to Frederick, Minnie, unless you desire to do so very much," he said. "We are well settled here, and building is going on all about us."

"But, father," she answered, "we cannot live in this little hut all the time."

"I know that, and so I propose that we build another room of boards, and join it to the cabin. I have been talking with the carpenter about it, and I find it will not take more money than I can spare. I thought you had earned as much as I this winter, and I ought to consult you."

"Oh, father, if we could do that," said Minnie, quite excited, "I should like very much to stay here. I have learned to like my cabin home."

"Well, Minnie, I'm very glad to hear you say so," John replied; "for I feel that my happiest and best days have been spent here, and I am loth to leave. Now we will talk about the building."

And from this talk there resulted more hammering; and the smell of the new boards which were forming the tiny frame structure on one side of the cabin was most delicious perfume to Minnie.

Families moved into the two houses already finished, and "the store," as it came to be called, was a fixed fact. Minnie was as happy as a lark all the day long, and went about her work singing.

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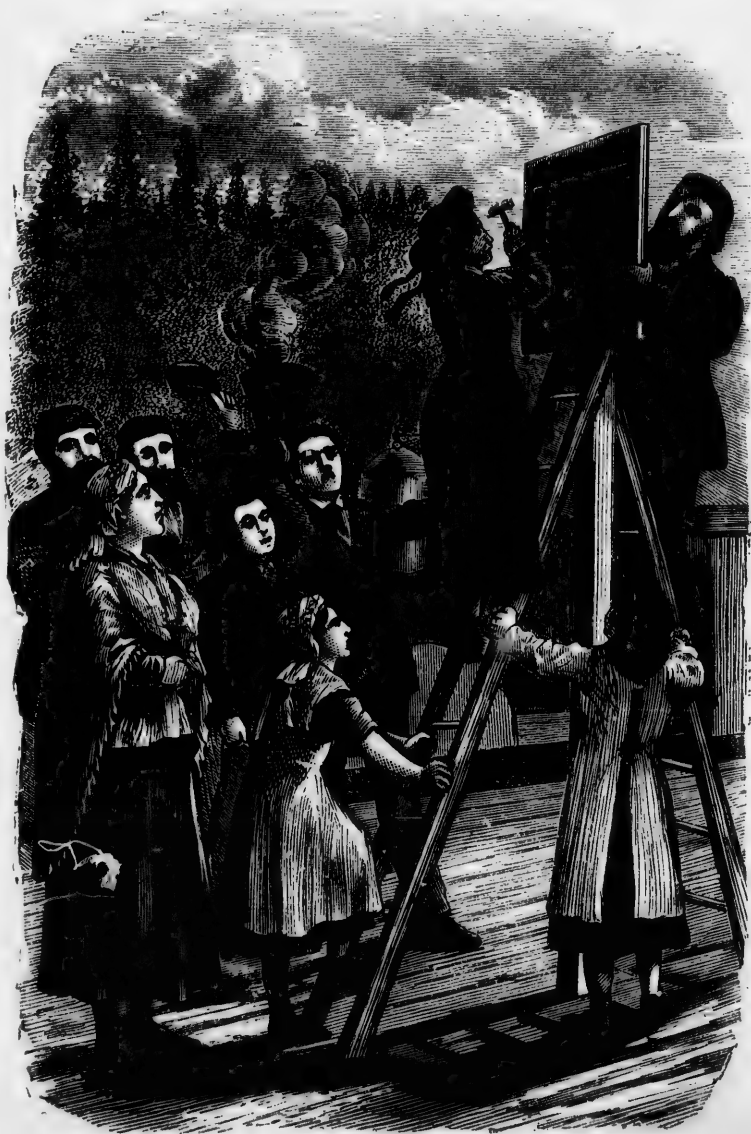
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NAMING THE NEW STATION.



and provisions had necessitated the halting of the train on several occasions ; and as it takes very few houses to make a station on the Canadian roads, the railroad company talked seriously of having one at this point.

It happened one morning that Minnie came rushing to her father in a great excitement. "They are building a station ! they are building a station !" she cried. "Come and see."

He went with her, and they found the entire number of villagers assembled, rejoicing over the beams and deals which were to be formed into a station-house. Every portion of the work was watched, and the villagers contributed to furnish a large sign-board, with the name upon it. They had a grand gala day when it was finished, and they raised the sign upon it. They all assembled near the station as the train approached, and as it stopped for the first time at the station. They raised the sign at a given signal, and some one called out, "Let the first nail be driven by the bravest girl in all the land—Minnie, the Woodman's Daughter."

And as the sign was fastened into its place by Minnie's steady hand, they all shouted,—

"Three cheers for the bravest girl in Forest Crossing."



CHAPTER X.

WORKING FOR CHRIST.

AND was Minnie satisfied? No, not yet. It was a great happiness indeed to know that her father was one of the followers of the lowly Saviour, and that even William Adams was inquiring, "What shall I do to be saved?" Minnie and her father had been studying their Bibles and talking with each other, and God's Holy Spirit had been present with them.

"These disciples of Jesus that we read of, Minnie," he said one night, after closing his Bible, "they all went about telling to all the world that they were His followers. There is no preaching here, and no place of worship for the people to meet in. Could not we do something for the good of those who have

come to settle in the place? Think what can be done."

So Minnie's little brain was set to work puzzling out a way. She was not idle all this time. There was not a new family that moved into the village but who soon knew her by her little acts of neighbourly kindness. A word to the children, the loan of a cup of meal, the pleasant morning salutation, all made her known and liked there. The new room was her pride, and she kept it in the best of order. It was used as a sitting-room in the day-time, and her own sleeping-room at night.

It was into this room that she went one day when her father was in the forest, and when she had fastened the door she knelt down to pray. The prayer was long and earnest, the room was perfectly still, and not a sound was heard, yet Minnie still knelt beside her bed. At length she rose, and going to her trunk, took from it paper and pen and ink. Writing letters was an unusual occupation for Minnie, and she went about it rather awkwardly, but her heart was in what she wrote, and that made the task easier.

"DEAR MISS DAYTON,—You were so kind

as to tell me that whenever I needed help I might write to you ; and although I have thought of you many times, and wished to see you, I have never felt that I could write. Now I feel that perhaps you can help me, and I know of no one else who can. Since you were here in the winter our village has increased in size, more people have come to live here, and the cars stop here regularly every day. We are not going back to live in Frederick, but as father has built a room joining the cabin, we shall stay here.

“During this winter, which has proved so happy to me, my dear father has learned to love the Saviour, and now I think that William Adams, whom you will remember as the one we were anxiously seeking the night you were here, is longing to come to Christ. Yet, dear Miss Dayton, ‘how shall they hear without a preacher?’ and ‘how shall he preach except he be sent?’ This, then, is what I have to ask of you. Can you send us one of God’s ministers, if only for one day, that we may make a little sanctuary in the wilderness? I will receive any one who will consent to come, and be glad to do all in my power for his comfort.

"Forgive me for writing so long a letter,
and believe me,

"Ever gratefully yours,

"MINNIE DREW.

"Forest Crossing."

Perhaps you will say that a simple girl, a woodman's daughter, could not have written a letter like this. Why not? She wrote of that which was dearest to her heart, and it was consecrated by prayer. Did not God's Holy Spirit come down and guide her thoughts as she wrote? Was it not almost like a message from the Lord Jesus Himself—"Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature"—to the one it reached?

Miss Dayton read the letter with a throbbing heart, for our Lord, who never forgets our secret longings, was answering one of hers. To help to send the message of salvation through Christ to those in darkness had always been her greatest wish, and here was her opportunity.

Minnie said not a word of her plan, but counted the time when it was possible for an answer to come, and then was on the station step when the tiny mail-bag was thrown. No

letter that day: so Minnie watched and prayed through another day, and then another, with unwavering faith—she had learned to trust now—until at length the third day brought a letter. She seized it eagerly, and ran away quickly to be alone where she could read it—them, I should say, for there were two. The first was from Miss Dayton.

“DEAR MINNIE,” she wrote, “I am so glad to be able to help you; and I am so rejoiced that it is *such* help. My dear old pastor, who has led many to Christ through long years of usefulness, will be with you at Forest Crossing on the 12th of April, and I am coming with him. Do not be disturbed about our accommodation or anything of that sort; remember only the message he brings, and think how that completely fills our hearts. I enclose his letter. We shall come, of course, by the evening train, on the 11th.

“Yours affectionately,
“GERTRUDE DAYTON.”

This was the other:—

“MY DEAR CHILD,—I shall be glad to come to you with Christ’s message, and I thank Him

daily that he put it into your heart to write to dear Gertrude. I feared at first that I could not come, but with God all things are possible ; so if He pleases I will be with you on the 12th of April.

“Sincerely your friend,

“M. STANHOPE.”

Can you imagine Minnie's joy ? It seemed to her that she could scarcely wait for her father's return from the forest to tell him the great news. When he came at last, and she told him, and gave him the letters, he received it more quietly than she had expected, but still she could see that he was very glad.

“Why did you not tell me, Minnie, that you had written ?” he asked.

“Because, father, if God had wished us to wait, it would have been better for only one of us to bear the disappointment.”

“You are a good girl,” he said, gravely, and put the letters in his pocket, and went out.

Presently, when Minnie looked out of the window, she saw him go into William's cabin. “He is going to carry the good news,” she said softly to herself.

It wanted only two weeks to the 12th of April, and the time between was well used. It would not be warm enough for the meetings to be held in the forest, and Minnie determined to convert the new room into a chapel for the occasion. This was easily done, for she so represented the anticipated visit to the villagers, that they all promised to come, each one with a chair for himself; and her little table, which her father had made from a tree, she covered with a little red shawl, and placed a Bible upon it: this was the pulpit. Her father spent many hours in cutting rude candlesticks to hang upon the walls, and one, more firm and almost ornamental, to place upon the table. William Adams came and looked in occasionally while the preparations were going on, but said not a word in any way.

Finally, Minnie asked his assistance.

"William," she said, "I want some ground pine. If you find any in the forest to-day will you please bring it home? I wish to ornament the room a little."

He looked pleased and nodded. In the evening, when he returned, he stopped his team at the door, and called out to her. She came quickly, and found he had gathered an

immense quantity of the beautiful creeper, and had even twined some into wreaths. "I will come over and hang it for you after supper," he said, in answer to her thanks.

Finally, everything was ready, and the day arrived. Minnie was in a state of the most eager excitement, and was ready for them long before the train arrived; but at length it came, and Minnie felt Miss Dayton's kiss, and saw through her tears the good face of the white-haired old man, who was shaking hands with her father. They went into the cabin together, and Minnie gave them the best supper her stores could afford, while she talked with Miss Dayton. She seemed a little timid about talking to Mr. Stanhope, but when they were quite rested she asked him if he would like to see the place she had been arranging for worship. He looked a little surprised, but said, "Certainly," and followed her. Minnie had lighted two or three candles in the room, and the smell of the fresh wood-creepers made the air quite fragrant.

The little room was quite bare, save for its green trimmings, and Minnie's table with its red cloth and Bible; but the thought that had been in every part of the preparation

was so evident, that the good minister looked down upon her as she stood beside him almost wonderingly, to think of her zeal and faith.

They all sat down presently, and had a long talk together. Minnie's father told of his new hope in Christ, and how he had learned that He was the one sacrifice for sin. "What I want now, sir, and what Minnie wants, is that we may be known to be Christ's disciples, and do something to serve Him," said he, in conclusion.

"I feel, sir," said Minnie, "that Christ has been here all through this hard winter; and now that our trials are over, the least that we can do is to publicly praise Him for His goodness to us."

While they were still talking, the door was pushed open gently, and William Adams came in. Minnie rose quickly and introduced him to Mr. Stanhope, and then asked him to take a seat. He did so almost without a word, and sat listening to the conversation as it went on. It finally turned upon the night of the great storm and the detention of the train.

"I was out in that storm," said William, suddenly.

"Are you the one they were seeking in the snow?" asked Mr. Stanhope.

"Yes, sir, I am that man, and I was out in it many hours. I can never tell any one, sir, how I felt that night. It seemed to me that all the stories I had heard read by Minnie here would come up before me as the snow was beating in my face, and one in particular, where Jesus stilled the tempest with His one word; and by-and-by I began to pray, 'Master, still this tempest! Master, still this tempest!' until it seemed to me that I had repeated it over and over a great many times. Then I said, 'If God takes me out of this I'll be a better man.' Well, you see, sir, God did take me out of it, and not only that, but saved my wife and child. Now, I want to do something, just as I said, only it seems to me that I am too low down like for Christ to care for."

"He came to die for you, William," said Mr. Stanhope, "and He wants you to believe in Him and love Him."

"If I thought that, sir, I'd do it," said William, bringing his hand down heavily on his knee.

"He came to seek and to save that which was lost, and He came out into the storm to

give you His message : you say that yourself. Can you not love Him ? ”

“ What did He do it for ? ”

“ Because He loved you, and wanted you to go to heaven, and live with Him when you die.”

“ I could love Him for that,” said the man, in a broken voice.

And then Mr. Stanhope knelt and prayed with them that this new hope might grow and strengthen until they were made fit for the Master’s kingdom above. Finally, he ended his prayer with a thanksgiving, so earnest, so overflowing with feeling, that Minnie completely broke down, and sobbed aloud. And when at last they bade each other good-night, Mr. Stanhope said, with a smile, “ I feel, with the disciples, ‘ Lord, it is good for us to be here.’ ”

The morning of the 12th of April was mild and warm, and as Minnie came out into the air it seemed to her that the spring was almost come. The buds were beginning to swell, and there was a fragrance in the air, as if the flowers were trying to break through the brown mould that had covered them so long. Minnie was very happy ; it

seemed to her that a new life was born in her, and that God was very near. The smoke was curling up from the chimneys of the different cabins, and it seemed to Minnie as if the new little town was about to have God's blessing descend upon it. She went about her morning's work as if in a dream, and her face had a new light upon it.

There was to be a service in the morning and in the evening. When the time arrived the villagers came one by one, each with a chair, and so gathered in the little room. The silence was profound throughout the service, and the sermon was such a call to all to come and be saved, that it moved every heart. Christ was there. They were met in His name, and His Spirit seemed brooding over the place. The congregation dispersed almost in silence, and a Sabbath quiet seemed to continue throughout the whole day. At night they met again in the same room for a prayer-meeting, and then William Adams had a word to say.

"I'm going to try to be a new man, my friends," he said, "and, believing in Christ, I think I shall succeed. But, if any one of you sees me doing anything wrong you must

stop me, and say, 'Bill, remember whose servant you are!' and then I shall do better."

It seemed to Minnie, as she fastened the window and put out the candles, that the place had been consecrated; and, as she saw the moon streaming down upon the quiet forest village it seemed that upon the new town there had descended a blessing which should dwell there for ever.



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